

## **WILSON FAMILY**

MARY AGNES (known as Maimie) 1868-1957

CHARLES WILLIAM McHARG 1873-1957

JESSIE SUSAN 1876-1889

AGNES HAY 1878-1958

MARGARET RAE 1880-1959

I first knew most of them when they lived at Barrhill in what was then known as Osborne Park, later Swanbourne, in the house that has since become a Nursing Home called I think Montrose. Uncle Andrew and his wife May lived nearby in Congdon Street in the house now occupied by Alan and his mother. It was then called Dunolly. I believe Auntie May looked after me as a small child when I had whooping cough. The Barrhill home had a lawn tennis court at the back where they often had friends in for an afternoon of tennis, I spent many weekends there and was always very properly dressed with hair-ribbons just right. I was sent there to amuse John, which meant to read to him, but the poor child was quite incapable of giving any sign of interest, being severely spastic, unable to do anything for himself and only able to make noises to indicate basic feelings or needs. It was a job I did not enjoy. Boys from the nearby Scotch College also were sometimes sent over to play which John seemed to enjoy watching but also became distressed at times when it seemed he had some realisation of his own situation. Particularly when my younger brothers grew from being as helpless as John was, to being toddlers and then able to walk.

The family moved to Melbourne in about 1920, first renting a house, then Charllie had Linlathen built, in Mont Albert Road, close to Balwyn Street. It was there that I really came to know them as I spent some time in Melbourne before the war, and also on occasions when in Melbourne during the war, and when we lived at Frankston and later in Kew.

Agnes was the only one who lived away, only making her home at Linlathen after Murray was killed in 1953. She had made a career for herself as a Postmistress, mainly in New South Wales, I know she spent a lot of time at Kiama on the coast, and later at Maree. So she was always independent and preferred living in Guest houses or hotels and had no liking for ordinary domestic duties. She was on her way I think to England for a holiday when she came to see our family in Herbert Road, I remember her as a very bright kind of person with curly reddish hair, tall, her ship had called in at Fremantle and she took the opportunity to visit her relations as ships usually stayed a few days then. I was about eight at the time. She was living in a Guesthouse in Queenscliff, retired, when she became urgently needed at Linlathen in 1953, the whole family were in shock after Murray's death and Margaret had collapsed and fallen in front of the open fire in the dining room and her face and arms had been badly burnt. Agnes at times told me quite a lot about the family, this was in later years.

My sister Adele had stayed with the family for quite a long time, she had contracted a form of typhoid fever when a young woman, had been very ill, had been looked after by a young doctor Gordon Hislop who later became a specialist and looked after my father, in fact gave him about five years of reasonably good life by putting him on

insulin, this was after the previous doctor had told him that he must just concentrate of seeing that his affairs were in order as he had at most three months to live. That was when they remembered the clever young man who was now a specialist physician, Dr. Gordon Hislop. Adele had in fact contracted typhoid fever when a small child, our grandmother (Teesdale) had taken her then to her home in West Leederville and nursed her to a full recovery, the only after effect being that all her pretty curls were cut off (routine then during fever) and when her hair grew again it was quite straight. About the only thing people could do in those days to prevent the spread of a fever throughout a family was to keep the sick person apart. Failing that, a sheet soaked in carbolic was hung over the door. I can remember that, it must have been when Gordon got diphtheria, and after recovery, sulphur was burnt in the sick-room by putting live coals in a dust-pan and sprinkling sulphur over it. (this same method was used when I was doing my nursing training at Perth Hospital, we did three months at the Infectious Diseases Hospital, during my time there it was mainly diphtheria, occasionally scarlet fever and whooping cough, then polio where the first of the iron lung equipment was used, I remember the night when the power was off, the doctor kept the machine operating manually until morning when power was restored, Roland Anderson, he had contracted polio as a child and had a withered arm. Later, during the war, in Greece, Tommy soldiers who came to us after escaping through Crete, told me of this Perth doctor Roland Anderson who had done such a lot to make sure they carried on when they would have given up, they had no idea of his disability.

When John was born, urgent telegrams were sent to Melbourne for Margaret to come and help her sister Maimie look after the motherless baby, Margaret was at the time working as a secretary where she was highly valued, and where she also had a very dear friend, Hugh Brown, and they would have married in time. But as the months went by it became obvious that the infant was not developing normally and Margaret became, with Maimie, a full-time carer for the disabled child. Their mother helped with some of the cooking, sometimes. Margaret was the far better organiser, but being the younger sister, was most of the time left to fix problems. I remember when staying weekends there, Maimie would hire, or dismiss, the housemaid, without consulting Margaret. This did not make for harmony, but as they had no alternative they just had to carry on. Maimie was a small woman, barely five feet, less as she became older, Margaret was fairly tall, as was Agnes, none of them ever overweight as I recall. Hugh Brown went to the war, was wounded, came to teach at Guildford Grammar School where Frank knew him as a housemaster, and we saw quite a lot of Hugh on Sunday afternoons at Linlathen when we lived in Kew. He wrote two books, mainly about reform for the Anglican Church, for which Margaret had typed the manuscript. Margaret was deeply affected when Hugh died, he had in his later years devoted himself to caring for his mother, had little money, and his bad leg gave him more trouble. He was a nice man. I had a deep affection for Margaret, life was not kind to her and she was quite bedridden for about the last year of her life.

## WILLIAM WILSON 1839-1914

William's formal education ended when he was 18. The family business had failed and it was necessary for the older boys to earn money so that the younger son James could complete his medical training at Edinburgh University. He did this, and was in turn able to educate his own sons, one of them became a leading surgeon in Sheffield.

The Wilsons had been tenant farmers in Ayrshire for many years. They prospered, and moved to Stirling and started milling woollens. This was a good move, but in time there were too many mills for the amount of water available for the waterwheels, and their mill failed.

So it was that William, with his older brother Robert who had already had some trading experience, set off for Melbourne to make their fortunes. Robert soon decided to go to America, where he later started The American Trading Company, trading between America and Australia and various places in the Pacific as well as England. William stayed in Melbourne, trading mainly with Scotland, in drygoods organised by his father. He was never a money-maker, but there is no doubt that he was a well-loved family man. He married in 1864. His wife was Mary McHarg, born in Barrhill in Scotland and had come to Australia with her parents as a child. They were married in North Melbourne.

William wrote many letters to his father, one of them somehow came back to Melbourne and part of it I have now, giving a very good description of Melbourne as it was then. It was probably given to one of my uncles when they visited Scotland.

William and Mary had ten children including twin girls one of whom died soon after birth, the other one, Jessie died as a young girl, with consumption.. The others lived well into old age. The children were:

William Garrick, born 1865, died in Sydney (playing golf, or on his way home from the golf course) in 1933.

Andrew Oswald, born 1866, died in Melbourne in 1950. He had a fall and fractured his hip, and never recovered.

Mary Agnes (known as Maimie), born 1868, died in 1957 in Balwyn, in Linlathen.

Robert Crichton (Bob), born in 1870 died in 1935 in Melbourne, cancer.

James Herbert (Jim to his family, Herbert to my mother), born 1872, died 1942 after a series of coronary occlusions which had forced his early retirement in I think 1934. He died at home in Shenton Park, my mother said (as she was pouring his second cup of tea that afternoon).in 1942.

Charles William McHarg (Charlie), born 1873, died at Linlathen in 1957. He had developed Parkinson's disease.

Jessie Susan, born 1876, died 1889 in Melbourne, of consumption.

Agnes Hay, born 1878, died in Melbourne after a stroke, in 1958.

Margaret Rae, born 1880, died in 1959 after having been bedridden for several years, at Linlathen.

Henry Edward Hall owned property in Leicestershire called Shakerstone which was entailed. He was able to sell part of it and with the proceeds chartered part of the ship Protector and brought his family plus various farm workers and tradesmen, to the Swan River settlement, arriving at the end of 1830. The youngest child was aged one year, named

James Anderton Hall. He eventually married Lucy Lazenby who bore six children and died aged 33 years. Then married Lily Helena Wells (? Bruce) and had another six children four of whom survived including Edith Olive Hall.

Edith Hall married James Herbert Wilson and had six children including Olive Adele Wilson. Adele married James William Lang and had two children, one of whom was Stuart James Lang.

Stuart married Eva Kristina Alexandersson and had two children Camilla Maria Adele Lang and Andrew James Lang.

## **JAMES HERBERT WILSON (1872-1942)**

My father.

So it is not easy to write objectively as I had very little personal conversation with him as often happens in a large family. What I can write about is what I remember about the things he did, and facts I have gathered over the years, mainly from papers kept at Linlathen where his mother, brother Charlie and sisters Maimie and Margaret lived from about the mid-twenties. After the last of them died I was living in Melbourne and Frank and I had been more or less looking after them for years and it fell to me to sort out all the family stuff, and there were quite a number of suitcases filled with old papers and letters, it was a large home and Charlie had also had a self-contained unit added to it where he lived when he was not living in the home he had built at Sherbrooke.

JIM as my father was always called by his family and friends (my mother always called him Herbert) had a sister JESSIE who was a few years older, and she had developed Tb. which was then called consumption, and the family resources were at a low point, with the older brothers more or less keeping things going by teaching in Government schools wherever there was an opening so it was likely that Jim did not get the full education the others had received but really was quite well educated as they always were a very united family and the older ones made sure that the younger ones did not miss out. I know that Jim when young developed a stammer, and the older boys put their knowledge of the classics to good use by getting him to read slowly, and effectively, with the result that when he was 11 or 12 he won First Prize for elocution, the prize being a large, illustrated volume of Shakespeare which is now in the possession of my nephew Alan.

The family had acquired a block of land at Kinglake up in or near the Dandenongs, and it was decided that Jim, who was a strong healthy lad, would go up there and start growing potatoes, always considered a good cash crop, and that his younger brother Charlie would later join him in the enterprise. Jim worked very hard, first chopping down trees, then building a small cabin (he was able to get a bit of casual help), then digging a well. He was able to work out all the specifications etc and wrote frequently to the family making suggestions as to how things could be done, His handwriting at this time I found very interesting, showing the beginnings of the really beautiful script he developed as he got older. In later years, in fact not long before he died, his bank manager told me that his writing, and his signature, were quite remarkable in that they were both easily read and beautiful and never had varied in all the time he had known Jim. Anyhow, when Jesssie died the family became very concerned about Jim, as he was getting too many bad bronchial attacks, and as his brother Andrew had gone to Western Australia and developed quite a reputation as a good architect, Jim should go and join him. Charlie had shown no interest in growing potatoes. A bad storm finished the Kinglake venture as a large tree came down and fell across the little cabin, destroying everything in it including a violin which Jim had taught himself to play. He had a beautiful tenor voice and later in Perth was a member of a men's choir called the Leidertaffel, they used to put on concerts regularly in the Perth Town Hall.

At this time gold fever was nearing its peak, (I have not yet discovered how to put in an apostrophe with this little keyboard, much smaller than the Desktop) so it was not long before Andrew and Jim decided to go to Geraldton, and head out to I think somewhere near Mullewa. Great adventure. But no gold. So it was back to Perth and Jim had no difficulty in finding a post in the Public Service, where his good mathematical ability as well as his handwriting were an asset. He was in the Accounts Department for some years, there is a photo somewhere of him at his desk, a large one with many pigeonholes as was normal for the time. I remember when a small child, he told us he had that day counter-signed the largest cheque the department had ever written, it was for over a million pounds, an enormous sum for those days. Andrew continued as an architect, years ago when travelling in the area with Frank I saw a brass plaque on the Boulder Town Hall with Architect- Oswald A. Wilson on the bottom after all the other names.

My father was evidently enjoying life. He had joined a rowing club as well as the choir, and his name is mentioned as being a member of the West Perth Presbyterian Church (later to become the Ross Memorial when the fine new church was built). He won the sculling Championship, and that is how a very good pair of binoculars came to our family. I used them for some years but gave them to one of the young people who went yachting, probably Alan. I had a smaller pair for myself which Frank and I used a lot when travelling, and now have a very small pair, still used occasionally. He married in I think 1903, living in a rented home in Lyall Street in South Perth, and then I think after Jean and Gordon were born, he had a stroke of luck and won 100 pounds, whether on a horse or a lottery or a raffle I have no idea, but the result was that he was the owner of two blocks of land west of Subiaco. Andrew designed and supervised the building of the house. I saw the specifications after my mother died and later on gave it to the present owner. There was no road, Onslow Road was hardly more than a gravel track. And public transport was about ten minute's walk to the west, and there was a tram a bit further in the opposite direction. The house was built in 1908 and the Rosalie School had been opened in 1906. My father put up a summer house in the back yard, built of untrimmed logs and a fence all around the outside, just uprights with two strands of wire. The postman came to the back, near the kitchen, on a horse, mail was delivered morning and afternoon and on Saturday morning. That was the time of penny post. A wooden wash house, wooden shed where tools and wood were stored, and a W.C. with a pan which was emptied once a week by the nightman who came in the early hours of the morning. Rubbish was disposed of by putting it in "the hole" which was as I remember about four feet square and quite deep, dug of course by my father. He worked so hard. Leaving soon after 8am and getting home well after 6pm. Saturdays about 1pm. These were the normal working days even long after I started work. And in his little bit of spare time he mended our shoes, grew the fruit and vegetables, planted the garden, clipped the hedge in the front which served as a fence for many years, replaced the wire fence with wooden palings, calcimined all the inside walls periodically, made insect screens for all the windows - these are things I remember him doing. Much would have been during his annual two week's holiday.

James Herbert Wilson continued.

In the middle of June of 1914 my father bought a farm at Quairading for which he paid 1000 pounds sterling. This was a forfeited block of 1000 acres, consisting of 600 acres of first class forest land, mainly York gum, Salmon and Gimlet, second class land mainly white gum (200 acres) and 200 acres of third class land, plain and scrub country. There were some improvements, the price paid was 20 shillings per acres which included six shillings per acre for existing improvements. This was done through the Avon Roads Board and Lands Department and my father had been there to see it for himself (there was a reference in a letter to "his old campsite").

The actual location was **Avon Location 8286**.

My father spent his long leave of six months getting things started there, going by train back to Perth as necessary. At times he took each of the children with him for a brief time and it was something I looked forward to immensely as the others had always enjoyed their time there. However this was now war-time and everything changed and my turn never came.

It was sometime in the early twenties that he had to sell it. There was a lot of pressure on him to sell it as his brother Charlie had started a timber business in Murray Street in Perth and my mother had decided that she did not want to go to Quairading, and eventually he sold it for two thousand pounds which went into what then became C.M. Wilson Propriety Limited. Charlie was a typical shrewd businessman and was doing quite well. His friends David Arclay and Bill Fawcett, both members of the Presbyterian Church, as were all the Wilson brothers, also had some shares.

I have clear recollection of the place in Murray Street, near Milligan Street and extending to St. Georges Terrace where trucks came and went. The Murray Street entrance was an ordinary double-fronted office, cream cement rendered brick, with the name on top also in deep-cut cement. I remember being taken to Perth to get shoes and left at the office while my mother did other things and it was Bill Fawcett who looked after me, my father was in the yard supervising the stacking of timber being unloaded. So perhaps it was before 1920 that the farm was sold.

My father had gone to Devonport in Tasmania to arrange some contract for the supply of timber, probably Huon pine, or maybe what was called Hoop pine (like deal), and on the boat returning home he had a heart attack and was in the ship's hospital for some days. This was in the mid-thirties. I remember him telling us about it and his obvious amazement that so many of his fellow-passengers had shown such concern, especially the young people, even girls who used make-up! I think he was able to show his real self instead of the over-worked husband and father that we saw.

Charlie insisted that he cease work immediately which meant a quite serious lack of money. I had started at Perth Hospital by then so had little to do with the running of the household, Gordon was working in the country, Jean was married, Bruce at fifteen entered the Navy so Murray and Adele would have helped, (we all, as soon as we started work, handed the greater part of our pay to our mother, I remember when I was paid 35 shillings I gave mother a pound and bought my clothes, paid fares etc from the rest, Adele did the same).

My father died in June 1942, I had seen him for a few hours when our ship called in at Fremantle, we had five hours leave, and it was two weeks before I was able to speak to Perth from Adelaide we had set up a hospital.

CMW and my father and Maimie Margaret and Agnes will all need to be done together as their lives were all connected in too many ways.

First, AGNES HAY WILSON born August 1878 died 1958.

The first time I met Agnes was when I came home from school one afternoon and she was visiting my mother, very much a flying visit and I think she was passing through on a ship. I still have a mind-picture of a tall, slight woman with dark reddish curly hair, very pretty hair but a strong-featured face, with freckles, a happy face. And as I knew her later I know she was always a sociable kind of person, loved company, lived most of her life in boarding houses or guest houses, never learned much about cooking or domestic chores. She was the youngest of the family and the only one who to my knowledge went to Melbourne University. She started a little school where a large variety of subjects were taught. There is a brochure giving details in the large scrapbook which was at Linlathen. Agnes later on joined the Victorian Postal Service and was stationed in a number of places, and later on in New South Wales where I was told she was post-mistress for many years at Kiama and her last posting was Moree. She never married. In 1953 when my brother Murray was killed Agnes had to go to Linlathen, she had been living in Queenscliff in a guest house, enjoying her retirement. It was only then that I got to know her at all and she told me many little things about the family. She still had a good head of hair which she wore in a long heavy plait at night. She did the best she could in helping Charlie and Margaret to cope, Maimie was still able to do quite a bit but Margaret had been the mainstay of the family for many years. And unfortunately Margaret had a dreadful accident a couple of days after they received word about Murray fell forward into the unprotected fire in the dining room and was badly burnt about the face hands and arms. They sent a telegram to me in Perth I think the day after Murray's funeral, I was needed at Linlathen and arrived there to find Margaret in a sad state, heavily bandaged but refusing to go to a hospital. I sat and talked to her for ages and finally she agreed to let Dr. whose name I cannot remember, he was a wonderful man who was very well known for the work he had done during and after the war with badly burnt airmen. He saw her and between us she did get into a hospital and he did a very good repair job but really never recovered and was bedridden until she died, needing day and night nurses for most of that time.

CHARLES McHARG WILLIAM WILSON was born in September 1873. He showed early promise of being a successful businessman. He had kept a letter that his brother Andrew had written to him, Andrew then teaching in a school in Warrnambool. Charlie had evidently been given the job of buying a few things for his brother, Andrew had sent him a Money Order to pay for them, the twelve-year-old Charlie did it and sent a Money Order back with 10% deducted for his commission. He was ticked businessmanned off in no uncertain terms, this was a time when Andrew was sending most of his earnings home (his brothers had also done this) to help with family finances. Charlie learnt that family is family. Charlie later became apprenticed to his Uncle Robert Wilson who had a high-class Grocery store in Melbourne. After being there about a year Robert evidently thought he had reason to break the apprenticeship, Charlie was without a job, and Charlie sued his Uncle Robert and was awarded a thousand pounds in compensation. So Auntie Agnes told me, she said this was how he started his timber business in Perth. There is no doubt that Charlie was a hard-headed, tight-f



AGNES HAY WILSON 1878-1958

The first time I saw Agnes was when I came home from school one afternoon and she was visiting my mother, very much a flying visit, I think she was passing through on a ship. I still have a mind-picture of a tall, slight woman with reddish curly hair, very pretty hair, and a strong featured face with freckles, a happy face. And as I came to know her many years later, I knew that she was always a sociable sort of person, loved company, and lived most of her life in boarding houses or guest houses, never learning much about cooking or domestic chores.

She was the youngest in the family and I think the only one who went to Melbourne University. The others had all gone to a college in Melbourne after finishing their Government school education. She started a little school where a variety of subjects were taught, there is a brochure pasted in the scrap book I brought from Linlathen which gives the details.

Agnes at some time joined the Postal Service and before long was appointed Postmistress in various places, I know she spent years in Kiama on the New South Wales coast, and her last appointment was at Moree also in New South Wales. She never married. When she retired she still preferred to live in guesthouses and was happily settled in Queenscliff on the Victorian south coast when my brother Murray was killed and she was urgently needed with her family at Linlathen. And in the shocked state they were all in, Charlie, Maimie Margaret and Agnes, somehow Margaret had a fall in the dining room, fell forward on the unprotected fire and was badly burnt, face, hands and arms. Maimie sent a telegram to me in Perth to come to them urgently, I think it was the day after the funeral.

Agnes and Maimie were managing but Margaret refused to go to a hospital, when I arrived she was heavily bandaged but the doctor there was not able to persuade her, she had a nurse coming in but needed much more. It was only because I was able to tell her about the wonderful work Dr. Rank, a Melbourne doctor, had done with badly burnt airmen, that I was able to arrange for him to come and see her and treat her in hospital.

## **WILSON FAMILY continued**

Auntie Maimie being the eldest daughter had always had the role of taking the place of her mother as needed, as the next daughter Jessie died when young, and Agnes and Margaret were so much younger. She was still a very attractive woman when I first knew her, although she had a very pronounced stoop, perhaps the result of carrying small children around as a child. She died at home soon after Charlie had died, the nurse who rang and told me had been looking after Margaret at the time, it was quite a surprise as I had not been told that she was ill and had been at the place frequently. Margaret had gradually become bedridden, the plastic surgery done by Dr. Rank had been very successful and although her arms were quite scarred, her face was not very marked.

Agnes had been trying to cope with household affairs, at the time there were a number of people in and out, a full-time nurse looking after Margaret in the day-time, and another full-time night nurse, a relieving nurse for each, a woman to come in and cook meals for a few hours each day, and a gardener who came once a week I think.

Agnes was becoming very forgetful and acting strangely, she had a stroke and died in hospital in 1958, a year after Charlie and Maimie. Margaret Had never been able to accept the fact that Charlie had left the bulk of his estate to the Church, she refused to read his will, just went into denial, said that 'dear Charl' would never do such a thing. He had stipulated that they could continue to live at Linlathen, but made no provision for their support. The National Trustees paid the rates and the gardener but his sisters had to meet all the other expenses including electricity and gas. Maimie and Margaret and I think Agnes each had a few shares in the C.M. Wilson business, Agnes had some savings from her years in the Postal Service, but there was really little and they could not afford to replace household items. Frank did quite a lot for them, the flooring in the kitchen was quite dangerously worn and broken, there was no refrigerator, and many other things really needed replacing. After Agnes died I found a number of cheques under her mattress, which fortunately I was able to recover and put into her estate. She left no will, so her savings were divided according to law. Maimie had left her shares to my sisters, she had little else. When the bank manager contacted me and said he could no longer accept Margaret's signature I was given Power of Attorney to sign for her. Their solicitor was Hartwell Lander who lived quite close and always kept in touch, had probably arranged it. With paying the staff, and also coping with the frequent changes, I just had to hope that the money would last, as the only money coming in was from the few shares Margaret had. Margaret did not make a will. After she died Frank and I spent most evenings and weekends sorting out and deciding what to do with everything, the Trustees had asked me to do this and said I could do whatever I thought fit with what was in the house. Garrick Wilson came down and said that all he wanted was the large picture of David Garrick the actor. I asked Hartwell what he would like, he had always been a great support to Margaret, and he selected a beautifully embroidered silk Oriental picture, quite large, that Margaret always kept on the wall in her bedroom, some things I sent to Herb Hay and his wife Peggy, distant cousins who had a large property near Bendigo, nice people and good friends of Margaret, gave the nurse who had stood by Margaret various items of furniture that would be useful in the small nursing home she was

hoping to set up, and picked out a number of things for my family in Perth, and a small table and the cutlery which I think Alan has, or had, it had the W initial. I remember the Red Cross or Salvation Army or such, sent a large stand-up bag for things that could be re-used, we filled four of these, and we had the incinerator going for a full two weeks with things. Maimie's room had been locked after she died, her wardrobe was full of moths, including her fur coat. I took many suitcases full of papers back to our home in Kew because it took time to sort through what was of family interest, or papers needed by the Trustees. Incidentally the Trustees wrote and thanked me and I seem to remember they also enclosed a cheque to cover expenses. Not a great deal but it was appreciated.